

(COMIC.)

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GRIMESY'S NEW GAME.

By WILL WINNER.



THE MAJOR REACHED OVER THE COUNTER, AND, GRABBING THE TREMBLING CLERK BY THE COLLAR, SNAKED HIM ACROSS.

GRIMESY'S NEW GAME.

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CHAPTER I.

A BADLY TREATED HOTEL CLERK.

"Any answers to my advertisement for a steady boy, Jags?" inquired Major Quillpick, as he strolled into the hotel office after a late breakfast, picking his teeth.

"Yes, sir, some," replied Jags.

"Did you engage any?"

"No, sir. I didn't think any of 'em would suit. One of 'em had just got out of the reform school; one admitted that he had been fired from his last place for stealing; three of 'em didn't admit it, but I know they had; one of 'em wanted fifty a week, didn't want to be woke till nine in the morning, and wanted his meals sent to his room."

"Ought to have hired him by all means," said the major. "And we might have furnished him a couple of footman in livery to wait on 'im besides. Any more?"

"Yes, sir; there was one pretty nice kind of a boy, an' he didn't care for much wages so start with, but he wanted us to board his family, consisting of a father, invalid mother, two brothers, and six sisters."

"Shot an' shell!" roared the major; "he didn't want much, either! Some o' these tarnation boys want the earth, with a barbed wire fence around it."

And the major walked to the front door, spread his legs apart, jammed his hands deep into his pockets, and sucked his toothpick.

Major Quillpick was a grinding old money-lender, who had held a mortgage on the Cosmopolitan Hotel, and after squeezing the life out of the young enterprising landlord, with exorbitant interest for a year, finally foreclosed, and took possession of the house.

Finding it impossible to get a tenant, he concluded to run the hotel himself, but partly owing to the unfavorable location of the hotel, but principally on account of his own unpopularity, business had not been sufficiently rushing since his occupancy to warrant making any additions to the house.

The major was one of those sanctimonious, hypocritical church-members who, aside from turning their religion to a business account, appear to have no other use for it except to make other people miserable and gloomy. As a consequence, he found it difficult to keep his help any length of time. Thus, awaking one fine morning, to find himself minus a bell-boy, he had advertised for one.

Tearful Jags, his clerk, was a weak and lamb-like young man with blonde hair, pimpled face, and a talent for chewing gum. In short, just the kind of a man to suit the major to a T.

"Whom have we here?" growled the major, wheeling his burly form around to eye the new-comer, who had glided safely by him and walked up to the counter.

The new-comer was a lad of somewhere around sixteen or seventeen, and was not what an artist would call a model of beauty; but he didn't pride himself so much on his beauty as he did on the size of his feet.

He had a head of bristly red hair, a turned-up nose, and freckles enough to supply a large family in hard times, and not miss them. His eyes were the only redeeming feature of his face. They were large, dreamy, and of that peculiar lovely hazel color that no first-class society novel heroine would be without if she had to pawn her diamonds.

"Want a bell-boy?" he asked of the clerk.

Jags glanced at the major, who was at that moment approaching.

The major grasped the boy by the shoulder and wheeled him around so that he could have a good look at him.

"Boy!" roared the major, in his sternest voice, "what's your name?"

"Grimesy, sir," answered the boy.

"Grimesy?" yelled the major. "Grimesy what?"

"No, sir; just plain Grimesy."

"What's your first name?"

"Grimesy."

"Well, then, what is your last or surname?"

"Grimesy."

"Do you mean to tell me that you have no other name than that outlandish Grimesy?" roared the major, impatiently.

"That's all," replied the boy, innocently.

"How in creation did they manage to distinguish you from the rest of the family?"

"They didn't half to. I was all there was of the family."

"Nonsense!" roared the major. "Do you mean to tell me that you had no parents, no sisters, no brothers?"

"Yes, sir, I do. I didn't have no sisters nor brothers, so I didn't need no parents to look after them, and I could always shift for myself."

"Have you no idea how you got into the world, sir?"

"Not the least, sir. The first I noticed I was here, and I've been around most ever since."

"Look here, boy," said the major, softening a little, "I believe you are lying to me, and I hardly know whether I can trust you or not, and yet there is something about your face that impresses me favorably. Are you sure you are honest?"

"I've never had a chance to risk myself with very much money, but I carried the key to the coal-cellar for the last man I worked for."

"Well, he must have placed confidence in you. How'd you come to quit him?"

"He went out o' business."

"What for?"

"He died."

"Oh. Are your habits steady?"

"What few I have are."

"Yes. One thing more: Are you ever given to practical joking?" asked the major, watching the expression of his face very closely.

"Don't know what that is, sir," said the boy, very innocently.

"Playing tricks on people," said the major.

"No, sir. Don't know how."

"I'm glad o' that, for the last boy I had thought of nothing else, and made life a burden for everybody he came in contact with. Well, Grimesy, I think I will give you a trial. I'll pay you a dollar a week and board to start with, and if you suit me at the end of three months I'll raise you twenty-five cents. You won't have much to do—answer the bells, show guests to their room, sweep out the office, run errands, and have all the rest of your time to improve your mind. You will be required to attend church twice on Sunday."

"I'm sorry I can't go oftener."

"Why?"

"Cause I'm afraid I won't know what to do with myself the rest of the time."

"Read and improve your mind. You'll always find a copy of the *Sorrowful Messenger* and *Weekly Groan* around the office somewhere."

"Thanks. What shall I do first?"

"The clerk will instruct you in your duties. Jags, tell Grimesy what to do."

"Yes, sir," said the clerk, meekly.

The major then went to the kitchen, and got a large market basket and went out. He always did his own marketing, and would not trust his own father to deliver anything. In the meantime Jags enlightened Grimesy upon his multifarious duties, and in order to show the boy that he (Jags) was a man of some importance, began at once to tyrannize over him.

"You want to step lively when you're spoken to," said the clerk; "partickler when the bell rings, you must git up stairs like as if there was a snake after ye, hear? When I say 'front' you must jump."

"Oh, of course," said Grimesy, pretending to be very badly frightened.

Just then a bell rang.

"There, now, front!" yelled the clerk. "Answer 14."

"Yes, sir," said Grimesy, and went up stairs three steps at a time.

In room 14 he found a tall, raw-boned man, with large hands and head that ran up to a peak, where the hair seemed to have lost its grip and slid off. He was an agent for galvanic batteries and all kinds of electrical instruments and appliances. His name was Euripides Killmany.

"Here, boy," said he, when Grimesy entered, "take this letter out and mail it."

"Yes, sir," said Grimesy.

"And here," he said, handing the boy a dime, "take that to grease your heels."

"Thanks," said Grimesy, and shot out like a flash.

There was no letter-box in the house, so Grimesy took the letter to the nearest street-box.

He had just dropped the letter, and was hurrying back to the hotel, when he heard some one call his name, and looking across the street, saw his chum, Merty Biffin.

"Hullo, Grimesy!" cried Merty, "where ye goin' so fast?"

"To the hash-foundry there on the corner," said Grimesy.

"W'at ye goin' ter do there?"

"I'm workin' there. Bell-boy."

"Ye don't say so! W'at kinder place is it?"

"Don't know yet. Only been there 'bout an hour," said Grimesy. "Queer lot though from appearances. The guv'nor's kinder stuck on his voice, and looks as if he'd been boiled in the light o' the moon and swelled. The clerk's a nice fellow, too; looks as though he'd come away an' forgot something, and talks like he had spider webs in his throat. I'm stuck on him."

"Any chance for rackets there?"

"Don't know. I told the guv'nor I never played no jokes, an' guess I'll haf to keep shady."

"That's all right about ye keepin' shady, Grimesy. Ye'll do that mebbe when ye croak."

"No, but honest, I've got to hold in over there, or I'll get killed right off. But I must go, Merty, or his job-lots'll be after me. Drop around after supper, and we'll see what we can work up in the way of amusement."

"All right, Grimesy. Good-by."

"Good-by, Merty."

Grimesy hurried back to the hotel, and found the clerk raving about his being gone so long. He gave Grimesy a blowing up, at the end of which he said:

"There's a package for 23. Now, see how lively you can get up there with it."

Grimesy made no reply, but took the package, which seemed to be a box about six inches square, done up in fine wrapping paper, and smelled awful sweet, and glided up stairs on the keen jump. At the same time he recorded a mental vow to get even with that clerk if it took a life-time. When he got out of the clerk's sight he walked more slowly, and gave himself up to reflecting upon how he could punish the clerk.

As he ruminated thus he suddenly thought of the package which he was carrying. What could it be? What if it was something which the clerk was sending to somebody—a lady, for instance! Grimesy examined the package, and saw that it was addressed to Miss Susie Mayhew, and as it was only tied with a string, he concluded to open it. He unwrapped the package, and found it was a paper box containing two pounds of candy. A thought struck him. He would remove the candy and substitute something else. But what could he put in its place?"

Just then he came to a room, the door of which was standing open, and there was no one in. He went in and looked about. Finally he noticed a cake of very common, cheap soap on the washstand. Grimesy took the soap and cut it into little cubes similar to the candy, and then poured out the candy. In the bottom of the box he found Jags' card, across the face of which the word "Compliments" was written. He put the soap into the box, the candy into his pocket, did up the parcel as it was before, and hastened to 23.

On knocking at the door, he was admitted by a rather good-looking young lady, with bleached hair and a good deal of paint on her face. This, together with a number of wigs, tights, and fancy costumes he saw scattered about the room, led him to conclude that she was a variety actress.

"A package for me?" she exclaimed, in that affected voice peculiar to ladies of that character. "How very kind!"

Grimesy was about to hurry away, when she called him back.

"This is for you, boy," she said, handing him a quarter.

"Thanks," said Grimesy, and hastened away.

"Grimesy," said the clerk, when he returned to the office, "did you deliver that package to 23?"

"Yes, sir," replied Grimesy, looking very innocent.

"What did she say?" asked Jags, rubbing his hands in happy anticipation, and smiling a very sickly smile.

"Nothing," said Grimesy.

"Oh, she hadn't opened it yet. Say," he said, suddenly growing very confidential with Grimesy, "what do you think of her?"

"She's a daisy."

"You bet she is. Say, don't give it away, but I've made a mash on her. I wouldn't have the major know anything about it though for the world. You just keep mum and help me out in this thing, and I'll make it all right with you."

"All right," said Grimesy. "I'll never squeal on you."

"That's the way to talk, but here comes the old man. Not a word, you understand."

The major came in flushed and hot from his exercise, threw himself into a chair, and mopped his brow with a big red handkerchief. The clerk lapsed again into the meek lamb that Grimesy had first seen him, while Grimesy himself sat quietly gazing into space, the picture of saintly innocence.

The silence was growing oppressive, there being nothing to break it except the monotonous ticking of the big clock and the dreary creaking of the electrical agent's sign outside, when suddenly there was heard the swish of rustling skirts on the stairs.

Grimesy turned his soulful eyes in the direction, and beheld Miss Mayhew descending. The major cast a stern glance in the direction, and his face took on an affable business smile. The clerk raised his lamb-like eyes in the direction and blushed just a little.

In the meantime the lady swept majestically down the stairs and into the office, and everybody could see that she was mad all the way through and from the opera-heels of her shoes to the tips of her bleached bangs.

Even the fat old office cat noticed this, and scooted under the counter at her terrible approach.

Grimesy noticed it, and looked out of the door at a watering-cart. The clerk noticed it, and turned pale. The major did not notice it, and arose with a bow and a dollar-and-a-half smile to receive her.

Miss Mayhew first approached the clerk, but suddenly turned, and facing the major, said:

"Major Quillpick, when I entered your house I was under the impression that you kept a respectable place, where a lady without male protection would be safe from insult, especially from the attaches of the house. But I find I am mistaken, sir."

The clerk's face was a study. It turned all kinds of colors alternately, and it was a question for a moment whether he would run or fall dead. The major did not look at the clerk, however, but at Grimesy. He had concluded at once that he had been doing something, but that young gentleman's face was such a picture of childish innocence that the major's suspicions were instantly allayed, and he turned his gaze upon Miss Mayhew.

"I was of the same opinion, Miss Mayhew," said the major, with polite dignity. "What has happened to change your opinion of my house?"

"This," she cried, handing him the box of soap. "Examine that, if you please, and see if you think your house is any longer a proper place for a lady unprotected to stop at."

"What is this?" roared the major, opening the box, looking on and smelling the contents. "Soap!"

He then turned over a card which was lying on top, and read:

"Compliments Mr. Tearful Jags. What does this mean?"

Here he turned a savage look upon the pale, trembling clerk, who did not dare to raise his eyes.

"It was not enough," said Miss Mayhew, bursting into tears, "to put up with this insolent fellow's actions and attentions, but now I must be grossly insulted by him."

The major was livid with rage. He still gazed at the frightened clerk, and it seemed as if there was danger of his fiery eyes burning holes through that young man.

"I could never believe," continued the tearful Susan, "that you, a major, would allow a poor defenseless woman to be insulted in your own house, sir. I never could have believed it."

This stirred the major's gallant soul to the very depths.

"Well, sir!" he roared, approaching a little nearer to the clerk, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

There was a dead silence, broken only by the ticking of the old clock and Miss Mayhew's sobs.

"Have you nothing to say in explanation of your conduct, sir?" roared the irate major.

"All I have to say is that—that—" stammered the clerk.

"That what?" roared the major. "What was your motive in sending a box of common nasty laundry soap to this young lady?"

"I—I—didn't send no soap," stammered the clerk.

"You didn't send it? What is your card doing in here?" yelled the major. "Isn't that your card, and isn't that your writing, sir?"

"Yes, sir, but—"

"Come, don't attempt to lie out of it, sir, you know you sent it."

"I sent that box, but—"

"But what, wretch," roared the major, getting madder all the time.

"It didn't have no soap in—it had candy. She's trying to—"

"Oh, this is too much, major!" cried Miss Mayhew, breaking out in a fresh place. "It is not enough to be insulted by having a box of filthy soap sent to me, but now I must be accused of trying to blackmail the miserable wretch! Give me my bill, and I shall leave the house at once."

This touched the major in even a tenderer spot than his gallantry—his pocket. He might have forgiven the clerk for offering an insult to the lady, provided the matter could be patched up, but when his indiscretion was going to be the means of taking money out of his pocket the major could stand it no longer. He reached over the counter and grabbed the trembling

clerk by the collar and literally snaked him across, and then shook him until his teeth chattered.

Having shaken him until there seemed to be no life left in him, the major hurled the clerk away from him, and he rolled into a corner.

"Now, sir!" roared the infuriated major; "get your duds and clear out!"

The clerk got on his feet and started to sneak away, but Miss Mayhew was touched with pity at the sight of the poor wretch, and said:

"Major, don't drive him away. His offense, bad as it was, has been sufficiently punished, and if he will apologize to me, I will consent to remain in the house."

This was all the major wanted. He had no desire to lose the clerk, for it would be hard for him to get a man of any ability to do his bidding, and serve all his contemptible purposes as Jags did, and for such small wages.

So, when the clerk had abjectly apologized to Miss Mayhew, and thanked the major for his kind-hearted leniency, almost licking his hand in doing so, he was forgiven.

The lady then returned to her room, and soon afterward lunch, or, as they called it, dinner, was called.

After dinner the clerk and Grimesy were alone in the office, and the clerk regained a little of his former insolence, but he treated Grimesy pretty decently.

"What do you think of this affair, anyway, Grimesy?" asked the clerk.

"I think the gov'nor like to snook the fillin' out o' your back teeth," replied Grimesy.

"I don't mean that," said Jags, very red. "I mean about that soap."

"Oh, the soap," said Grimesy, innocently. "It wasn't very good soap, I reckon, from the way she kicked on it."

"No—no; you don't understand. I mean how do you s'pose the soap got in that box?"

"Oh, I see. I have an idea how it got there," he said, pretending to grow confidential.

"How?"

"It was put in."

"You blamed idiot, don't I know it was put in? What I want to know is who put it in."

"That's different," said Grimesy, with a perplexed expression. Then suddenly brightening up as if a happy thought had struck him, he pulled the clerk to one side, and said:

"I have it!"

"What is it?" asked the clerk, eagerly.

"You know the old bloke in 14?"

"The electrical agent?"

"Yes the ten-story party that's ground through his hair, and has a hand like the hand of time, and whiskers for a cravat."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, it's my opinion he's got it in for you—he's jealous of you."

"What makes you think so?" asked the clerk, with a frightened look.

"I'll tell you," said Grimesy, with a mysterious air, "but you mustn't give me away."

"Of course I won't; go on!" cried the clerk, eagerly.

"You remember I took a letter out for him first thing this morning?"

"Yes, yes," gasped the clerk.

"Well, that letter was addressed to Taffy & Caramel, the same place where you got your candy."

"Is that so?" cried the clerk, with wide-open eyes.

"Yes, sir, and if I was you I'd have revenge."

"How can I do it?"

"Why, easy enough. Borrow the chambermaid's key to his room, and then to-night after he's gone to bed, you and I and my chum (he'll be here after supper), will disguise as burglars and slip into his room. When he wakes up and finds we've got the drop on him, and he has to swallow his words or eat a gun-barrel, we'll tell him we're bad men from Bitter Creek, and friends o' yours, and that he'll haf to come down handsome, and then apologize to you to-morrow, or down comes his meat-house. See?"

"Yes; but don't you think he would know us, and give me away to the major?"

"Naw, not the least danger of it. We'll be so well disguised that our mammas wouldn't know us, and he'll be too badly scared anyhow."

"All right," said the clerk. "The night clerk comes on at seven, so you and your chum come to my room, 8, and we'll prepare."

Just then three bells rang, 31, 18, and 14.

"That's him now," said the clerk. "Go to 18 and 31 first, and

then when you go to old Killmany's room, kinder make a note of how things are situated, so you'll know where to go to-night."

"All right," said Grimesy, and dashed off up stairs.

After he had answered 18 and 31, he stopped at 14. Killmany gave him another letter.

Grimesy noticed that the room was strewn from one end to the other, with electrical instruments of all kinds. The agent, noticing that he took an interest in the appliances, said:

"Come in, my boy, when you are at leisure, and I'll explain these things to you."

"Thanks," said Grimesy. "But I was just thinking it would be a good scheme to attach one of these wires to the door-knob when you go to bed, so that if burglars want to come in it would knock 'em silly."

"That would be a good idea," said Killmany. "I shall try it this very night. And," he continued, handing Grimesy a quarter, "there's for your smart suggestion."

As Grimesy darted through the office, the clerk stopped him to see to whom the letter was addressed.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jags. "This one's to Taffy & Caramel, too!"

CHAPTER II.

A DISASTROUS EXPEDITION.

Along about nine o'clock, Merty Biffin, Grimesy's chum, strolled into the office, and greeted Grimesy, who, having nothing else to do, had nodded himself to sleep.

"What makes you so late, Merty?" asked Grimesy.

"Business," replied Merty. "You know I'm assistant chambermaid in a livery stable now."

"Well, I hope they don't keep you as busy as they do me in this ranch. I thought you smelled horsey."

"Are they overworkin' ye, Grimesy?"

"I shed say so. Why, I've been up stairs three times and posted two letters to-day. The gov'nor has four boarders, and expects a new arrival to-night. I tell you, the wear and tear on my brain matter is something awful."

"How late do you hafter sit up?"

"Till the new boarder arrives, I reckon."

Just then the bus rolled up to the door, and a fat, grunty old party got out and waddled into the office, lugging two big valises.

"Front!" yelled the night clerk, and Grimesy jumped four feet high, made a wild dash half way to the clerk, and skated the rest of the way.

The fat man turned around and gazed at the boy in astonishment.

"Lively boy that," he remarked with a chuckle.

"First day," said Boggle, the night clerk. "Wait till he's been here a week, and you'll have to pull him with a rope. Grimesy, show the gentleman to 16."

"All right sir," said Grimesy, gathering the two big valises, and starting up the steps three at a time.

"Front!" yelled Boggles, just as Grimesy got to the first landing.

Grimesy dropped the big valises, jumped astride the railing, and came sliding down like a toboggan on a glassy hill-side. The valises ran him about an even race on the steps, and got down just in time to catch the fat man as he began to ascend, and the fat man took a header in one direction and his silk hat in another.

By this time Grimesy had reached the desk and asked the clerk what he wanted with him.

"I want you to show this gentleman up, and——"

"He's showing himself up, sir," said Grimesy, pointing at the fat man, who in falling had lost his wig, and in gathering himself up, was exhibiting a vast expanse of bald head.

"Don't be so infernally lively in gettin' up stairs," said the clerk. "This mishap may get you into trouble."

The clerk and Grimesy went to look after the fat man, who had by this time got on his feet and was swearing like a fiend.

"Are you hurt sir?" asked the clerk, in great concern.

"No, I'm not hurt," growled the fat man, "but I'm badly demoralized. Where's my wig?"

Grimesy picked up the cat and handed it to him, and in his excited state he took it without noticing what it was until the old cat gave a squeal, and laid hold of the old man's head with her claws.

"What in blazes is this!" yelled the fat man, firing the cat away from him and rubbing his bald pate.

The wig was finally found, and the old man started up stairs with Grimesy at his heels lugging the big valises.

"Grimesy," said the clerk, when that young gentleman got back to the office, "you may go to bed now if you wish."

"Thanks," said Grimesy, and he and his chum made a beeline for No. 8, the day-clerk's room.

That young man was waiting for them, and ushered them in.

"It's pretty early yet," said Jags, "but we may as well get ready for our adventure."

"Yes, it'll take us some time to make up," said Grimesy. "Got any disguises?"

"Yes," said Jags, "here you are."

And he brought out three pairs of villainous-looking whiskers and three tough-looking wigs which he had hired from a costumer for the occasion.

They were not long in donning the disguises, and with the addition of some old clothes which the clerk had borrowed from the porter, they were three as tough-looking villains as you'd care to meet.

They amused themselves prancing about the room until about midnight, when they sallied forth to visit 14. The clerk was very nervous, and it required the combined efforts of Grimesy and his chum to keep him from backing out at the last moment. Even when they were opposite the room the clerk said, in a shaky voice:

cast had intended to rob the occupant of 14, the major thought it would be a good idea to go in and inform that gentleman what had happened, thus exhibiting his bravery and making himself extremely solid with his boarder.

With this end in view, the major laid firm hold on the knob, but the next instant he went spinning away as though a prize-fighter had struck him, but being a powerful man, he didn't fall until he reached the stairs, when he took a header for the lower floor. After making a somersaulting tour of the entire flight, the major finally brought up on the office floor, so close to where the night clerk was sitting fast asleep that he knocked the chair from under the clerk and sent him sprawling.

The clerk jumped up, and began to swear before he realized whom he was addressing.

"How many more o' you drunken tramps are going to tumble down that stairs to-night?" yelled the clerk. "I've a notion to —"

But here the major had regained his feet, and the clerk saw who it was. He turned pale, and was on the point of apologizing, but the major apparently had business elsewhere, and rushed back up stairs, leaving the clerk in a state of collapse.

What the major really went back up stairs in such a hurry for was a desire to get even with the imaginary person who had



THE ELECTRIFIED KNOB HAD COME IN CONTACT WITH THE MAJOR'S HAND, AND HE LEAPED SEVERAL FEET INTO THE AIR.

"This is a foolish piece of business, boys; I think we'd better give it up."

"Give it up now, when you've been insulted by this cold-blooded villain!" cried Grimesy, in a dramatic tone. "This villain that is conspiring against your life!"

"That's all right," said the clerk, "but what if he's awake, and should shoot?"

"There's no danger," said Grimesy. "Open the door. I'll go ahead."

"Will you go in first?" cried the clerk.

"Of course. Open the door."

Jags unlocked the door with a trembling hand, and then took hold of the knob.

The electricity got in its work beautifully, and the next moment Jags was curled up in a ball about ten feet from the door, and yelling like an Indian.

Grimesy and his chum scooted along the hall and got into Grimesy's room just in time to avoid the major, who came tearing along at a 2:15 gait.

Jags was sitting up rubbing his eyes and wondering what had struck him, when the major arrived on the scene. Of course he didn't recognize the clerk in his disguise, and supposing he was some drunken tramp, gathered him by the collar and the trousers and fired him down stairs, accompanying the action with as strong an imprecation as his religious training would permit.

Having got rid of the "tramp," and concluding that the out-

knocked him down stairs. He had no distinct recollection of seeing any one, but in his present dazed state of mind he imagined that just as he attempted to open the door somebody had stepped out and slugged him. The more he thought the matter over the more thoroughly convinced he became that this was the fact. Having arrived at this conclusion it did not take him long to conclude that Killmany was the man that knocked him down.

So, forgetting for the moment the financial interest at stake, he rushed up to 14 again.

Now, it happened that Killmany was awake when the above described rackets occurred, and, knowing that they had been caused by the electrified knob, he concluded to come out and see what damage had been done. And he opened the door just at the moment the major reached it. Seeing the major standing there it instantly flashed upon him that he was the would-be robber.

There was a mutual glare between the two men for a moment, and Killmany was the first to break the silence.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he cried.

"Yes, it's me!" roared the major. "And I just want to see you do that again."

"Do what again?"

"Hit me as you did a moment ago, sir."

"I didn't hit you, but I will if you attempt to break into my room again, you old scoundrel."

The major said no more, but pranced up toward Killmany, intending to lay him out, but just then a draught of wind slammed the door shut, and brought the electrified knob in contact with the major's hand. The major leaped several feet into the air and came flop on his back.

He was considerably stunned, but more frightened than hurt. He had all he wanted of it, though, and gathering himself up went straight to his room and staid there.

While all this was going on, Grimesy and his chum had their heads out of the door far enough to witness the fun.

When all was quiet Grimesy and his chum called on Jags at his room. That young gentleman was lying across the bed groaning when they entered.

"What's the matter?" asked Grimesy.

"Oh! oh! I'm dyin'!" groaned Jags.

"What d'ye want to die for?"

"I'm shot! Oh! I sha'n't live an hour! Run for a doctor, quick!" cried Jags.

"Where are you shot?" asked Grimesy.

"Oh, all over. Go for a doctor quick. Don't stand there askin' questions when I'm dyin'."

"Oh, if you're dying there's no use going for a doctor. Better save the price o' the doctor to give ye a decent funeral. Hadn't I better have an undertaker come round and bring a few samples of his latest styles in coffins. You want a good fit, you know, and something you won't be ashamed to go into society with, or would you rather be cremated?"

"Oh, you heartless wretch!" groaned Jags. "Won't you go for the doctor?"

"If you say so, only I thought it would be cheaper the other way. You see, you'd save——"

"Will you go for the doctor?" yelled Jags, "or shall I have to get up and kill you?"

"Oh, I'd better go for the doctor. It'll be pleasanter all round, I think. By the way, Jags, I'll stop in and tell the gov'nor to come to see you," said Grimesy, and started off on the run.

"Don't you——" and the clerk jumped clear off the bed, but Grimesy was out of sight.

"Run quick and head him off!" he said to Merty. "If he tells the major anything about this I'm a ruined man."

"All right," said Merty, and he dashed away.

As Merty expected, Grimesy only went to his room, and he found him there. But he hardly knew him in the disguise which he had put on.

"What's the racket now?" asked Merty.

"Oh, I'm the doctor," said Grimesy. "I'm going to see his job-lots. Come to think of it, though, I guess you'd better put on the whiskers, Merty; you've got a heavier voice than I have, and he won't be so apt to smell a mouse if I fetch you in."

"All right, I'll play doctor," said Merty. "You make me up."

Grimesy made him up with a pair of long whiskers and a wig, and blackened his eyebrows. Then with the addition of a silk hat which they found in the room, and a small portmanteau, Merty made a very fair-looking doctor.

"What'll I dose him with?" asked Merty.

"I'll fix you up a dose in a minute that will make him weary for a week," said Grimesy.

"It won't kill him, will it?"

"Naw. But it'll make him wish he was dead."

Grimesy mixed up a compound of sugar, salt, soap, and cayenne pepper in about a pint of water.

"Now, the first thing you want to do is to bleed him, and then write out a prescription, and send me to get it filled. I'll pretend I'm going to the drug store for it, and I'll come here and get it."

"How are we going to bleed him?"

"That's easy. Just put some warm water in a bottle, and after scatching his arm a little let the water run on his arm and off into a wash-basin. He'll never know the difference."

Grimesy then returned to Jags' room, and told him the doctor would soon be there.

"You didn't tell the major, did you, Grimesy?" asked Jags.

"No. I was going to, but Merty said you didn't want me to, so I didn't," said Grimesy.

"I'm glad o' that, for if he finds out I'll lose my position sure. Oh, why don't that doctor come?"

Just then Merty strode in with all the dignity of a drum-major. He walked up to the bedside, and Grimesy said:

"This is Doctor Badotion, Mr. Jags."

Merty felt his pulse and looked grave.

"Where does it seem to pain you?" he asked, in a bass voice.

"Oh, all over!" cried Jags.

"Um," said Merty. "You've had a severe shock of electricity. Are you in the habit of taking these shocks right along?"

"No, doctor; I ain't had no electric shock. I've been shot."

"You are mistaken, young man. You cannot fool an old doctor like myself. You have had a shock by taking hold of an electrified door-knob. I can feel it in your pulse, and see it in your eyes."

This rather astonished the young man.

"Boy, get me a basin; I'll have to bleed the patient."

"Oh, dear! oh, my!" groaned the clerk. "Do you think that is necessary, doctor?"

"The only thing that will save your life."

"I s'pose it'll have to be done then. Oh, my! I wonder if I'll ever get over this!"

"Oh, yes. You'll be all right in a day or two."

In the meantime Grimesy brought the bottle of warm water and a basin.

"Now," said Merty, "as you are pretty weak, we will bandage your eyes so that you won't see the blood."

Merty then tied a towel over his eyes, wrapped a string tightly around his arm, scratched it with a pin, and putting the basin on a chair proceeded to let the warm water pour in a steady stream on Jags' arm.

They kept this up for a few moments, and he actually grew weak and pale. He finally said, in a feeble voice:

"Doctor, don't you think you've taken blood enough?"

"Not quite," said the "doctor." "I've only taken a gallon so far."

"A gallon!" cried the clerk, almost fainting. "How much do you expect to take?"

"Oh, about another gallon."

"Great Scott! D'ye think I can stand it, doctor?"

"I think so," said Merty, coolly; "I don't loose many cases. Still, of course, we have to take our chances in these life or death cases. If I notice that you're sinking very fast I'll send for your folks."

"Oh, Lord! I'm dying!" groaned Jags. "I can't live another minute! Stop the blood, do?"

"All right," said Merty, ceasing to pour the water on his arm, and then, in a confidential aside to Grimesy: "He's weaker than I thought he was. Here, boy, run and get this prescription filled quick. Run, now, d'ye hear!"

"Yes, sir," and Grimesy dashed away.

Allowing sufficient time to go to the nearest drug-store and back and a few minutes extra to put up the prescription. Grimesy raced back to the room out of breath, and handed the "doctor" a big bottle.

"Ah, here we are," said the "doctor." "We'll soon revive ye now. Boy, you've been a duse of a while getting this! Why didn't ye hurry as I told ye?"

"So I did, sir," said Grimesy, pretending to be awfully frightened. "But the drug-clerk's girl was in there, and he wouldn't do anything till he treated her to soda and licorice and worm candy, and then leaned over the counter talking to her for a long time and giggling, and——"

"Never mind about the drug-clerk, or his girl either, boy; get me a spoon!" roared the doctor.

Grimesy got a spoon and Merty poured out a tablespoonful of the horrible compound, and gave it to the clerk.

It nearly choked him, but he swallowed it and made a terrible face.

"Bah! That's the nastiest medicine I ever tasted in my life," said the clerk.

"Yes, it's not as pleasant as strawberries and cream, but it's better than death. Now, boy, you'd better get the patient undressed and put him to bed. I think he will be all right now, and I'll drop in to-morrow some time; but if he should get worse during the night call me up. Good-night."

Grimesy got him to bed, put a wet towel on his head, and in a few minutes he was fast asleep. Grimesy then left him.

Jags wasn't well enough to come down next morning, and when the major came into the office about nine o'clock he found Grimesy running the hotel.

"Where's Jags!" demanded the major, sternly.

"He's sick, sir."

"Sick, eh? What's the matter with him?"

"Don't know, sir. I had to get the doctor for him last night, and the doctor didn't know whether he'd pull through or not, but he's a little better this morning."

"That's a fine note!" exclaimed the major, "What business has a man with his salary to get sick?"

"I don't know, sir. I told him I didn't think you'd like it, but he went right on, and got sick just the same. Some folks will indulge in luxuries when they need clothes."

"Well," said the major, surprised at this speech, "you're a bright one. I guess I'll have to let you run the office until that idiot gets well. By the way, Grimesy, do you know who was making all that racket up stairs last night?"

"Couldn't say sir. I'm a perty sound sleeper. I only woke once, and then I peeped out and saw a big tough-looking loafer tumbling down stairs, and then I crawled in ag'in."

"Um!" growled the major. "Well, you take charge here until I get back from market, and if you get along all right I may raise your wages sooner than I expected."

"Thanks awfully."

The major hadn't been gone long when a tall, slim, hungry looking chap, with long hair, seedy clothing, and dirty fingernails, strolled in.

"Is the major in?" he asked.

"I'm afraid he is," said Grimesy.

"What d'ye mean, boy?"

"I'm afraid he's in a hole."

"You're too fresh, young man; I'll have to report your conduct to the major."

"Please don't."

"You'll have to act more civilly then. I want to know whether the major is in the house or not."

"Not all of him."

"What d'ye mean?" shouted the visitor.

"I mean that the major isn't in, but his better-half is," said Grimesy.

"How soon will his worse half be back?" asked the fellow, smiling in spite of his anger.

"Can't tell. Mebbe sooner, mebbe later. According to how many drinks he takes."

"Ah, I see. Does the old man drink as hard as ever?"

"Just about—on the sly, though."

"Of course. He always did that. Pretends to be very religious, but hits the bottle regular on the sly," said the fellow, winking. "Say, young feller, are you in charge here?"

"I'm supposed to be, why?"

"I'll tell you," said he, getting very confidential. "I've known the major a long time, and he knows me—"

"In the army with him?"

"Naw. He never was in the army, neither was I. We used to belong to the little German band, and he was the drum-major."

"That's where he got his title, eh? Well?"

"Well, the fact is, I'm hard up—need money. I know I couldn't get a cent out of the major, but he's always ready to make a dollar, whether it is honest or not. Now, I've got a scheme by which he and I can both make a stake, and if you'll introduce the scheme to the major I'll whack up with you on my share of the boodle."

"What's the scheme?"

"It's this. I've got a lot of so-called mining stock. The major can interest some of his rich friends in it, tell them that it's a big thing and all that sort o' rot, and make an appointment for me to meet them here at the hotel. I'll be on hand with my stocks, and the major can pretend to buy heavily so as to lead them on. When they find they're taken in the major can claim to be a victim as well as themselves."

"That is a pretty good scheme," said Grimesy, pretending to take to it kindly. "How much stock have you got?"

"A hundred thousand dollars. Located fifty miles from Tombstone, Arizona."

"And who are you?"

"My name is Epizootic Drivel. The major knows me. You just spring it on him, and if he thinks favorable of the scheme he can drop me a line at the Hotel von Frankfurtaurst, and I'll call to-night."

The fellow had only been gone a few minutes when the major came in, and after some other talk Grimesy laid the scheme before him.

The major smiled blandly, and said:

"Tut, tut! That is hardly honest, is it, my bo-?"

"I don't know much about such things, sir," said Grimesy, innocently.

"Of course you don't, my boy, of course you don't. How could you be expected to know?" said the major, placing his hand on Grimesy's head and looking very fatherly and pious. "But I tell you, my boy, the scheme is dishonest—dishonest, my boy. We'll think no more about it. This Drivel is a bold, bad man."

Nevertheless, Grimesy noticed that the major wrote a good many letters that day, and he caught a glimpse of one of them which was addressed to Drivel.

In the course of the afternoon several well-dressed men dropped in one after another, and were engaged in confidential conversation with the major; after which they went away, and the major appeared to be in great spirits all day. He laughed and joked with Grimesy, and even told him that if he succeeded in business as he expected he would do something

handsome for him. All of which our hero understood better than the old scoundrel imagined.

Some time after supper Grimesy's chum came in, and Grimesy told him what was going on, and said:

"Now, here's a chance for a racket by which we cannot only have some fun, but we can do some good."

"How are you going to manage it?" asked Merty.

"You know a dozen or so boys that you can get. Have them come to my room about nine o'clock, and I'll manage the rest."

"Let me see, it's seven now. All right, I'll have them there." And Merty slipped out quietly and went on his errand.

CHAPTER III.

A BAD NIGHT FOR THE BOODLERS.

Grimesy's chum had hardly gone when the same gentlemen whom Grimesy had seen talking to the major in the afternoon, began to arrive, and were hustled off into a private parlor. And not long afterward, Epizootic Drivel himself walked in, with his seedy clothes brushed up, his dilapidated silk hat exchanged for a rather doubtful sombrero, and his collar turned.

The major was off somewhere with his guests when Drivel entered the office, so he came directly to Grimesy, and after shaking him profusely by the hand, said, in a gleeful tone:

"The scheme is working like a charm, my boy, and your fortune is made. Look at me," he went on, parading himself in front of Grimesy. "Am I, or am I not, the ideal picture of a Western Yahoo? Do not I appear to have hayseed in my hair, and can't you imagine you smell buffalo grass on my clothes?"

"Yes," said Grimesy, "you look as much like a cowboy as two peas; but I don't know so well about the buffalo grass. If it smells like your clothes, though, it must make the buffaloes tired."

"You are facetious, young man, ha, ha!" laughed Drivel. "But really, don't you think my make-up will catch the old chumps?"

"Shouldn't wonder. I know it will catch flies if it's worked right."

"Ha! ha! You're very funny. Where's the major?"

"Don't know. 'Round somewhere with the old chumps."

"Ah, then they have arrived?"

"Yes; about a dozen or so of them."

"Where are they?"

"Dunno. The gov'nor's got 'em folded away somewhere. He'll—but here he comes now."

The major came in looking very indignant. He frowned at Drivel, at the same time Grimesy saw him wink, and said:

"Your wicked scheme, sir, cannot be entertained. You had better get out."

Drivel evidently did not understand his sly little game, for he said:

"What caused you to change your mind so suddenly, since you wrote me this afternoon?"

This broke the major all up, and he found it necessary to take Drivel to one side, when they had a long whispered conversation, which, from the frequent glances at himself, Grimesy concluded must be about himself. After a little the major and Drivel went off to the private parlor.

Pretty soon 16's bell rang and Grimesy darted off like a ramrod shot out of a musket.

Sixteen, it will be remembered, was occupied by the fat man whom Grimesy showed up the previous evening. When he entered, the fat man, whose name was Obediah Sweatwell, handed Grimesy a letter, and said:

"Mail that, my boy. And boy," he continued, as Grimesy was about to dart away; "do you know anything about this meeting to be held here to-night?"

"What meeting?" asked Grimesy, innocently.

"There is to be a meeting of capitalists here to-night to consider the advisability of purchasing the mining stock of a man from Arizona. Have you heard anything about it?"

Grimesy was cornered, and had to say "Yes."

"I thought so," said the fat man. "You are too keen a boy not to know something about it. Now, tell me, isn't this some swindling scheme?"

"Dunno, sir."

"Yes, but you do know," said the fat man, with emphasis. "Now, look here, I've been invited to attend the meeting, and invest some of my money in the stocks, and if you'll find out, if you don't know, or tell me if you do, whether the scheme is all right or not, I'll pay you handsomely for your trouble."

"Sir," said Grimesy, throwing himself back on his dignity, "do you take me for a boodle alderman? Do I look like a bribe-taker? Nay, perfidious wretch, I scorn your gold! But hold!

I'll give thee a pointer. Go to the meeting, listen to the confab, but don't put up any stuff, and when you hear somebody in the hall whistling 'Little Annie Rooney,' you unlock the door, and wait for developments."

The fat man looked astonished, and he gazed at Grimesy for a moment as a country horse gazes at a street-car, and finally said:

"I'll do as you say; if I don't, bust me!"

And Grimesy glided out like an eel out of a leaky basket.

When Grimesy had posted the letter and returned to the office, Boggles told him he might go to bed, so he slipped up to his room in double-quick time.

He found Mertý there with fifteen other boys of about his own age, and was having trouble to keep them quiet.

"Well, what's the racket?" inquired Mertý.

Grimesy explained the whole business to the boys, and then said:

"In the next room, which is a store-room, a lot of policemen's uniforms and clubs are packed away. We'll put them on, and I have false whiskers and wigs for three of us, and mustaches for the rest. We will march down to the private parlor in about half an hour, and when the door opens we will file in, and raid the den."

The boys were tickled to death with the scheme, and were not

hear the talk inside, and knew that the occupants of the room hadn't noticed the opening of the door.

Grimesy, therefore, pushed the door open, and the boys marched in.

The look of astonishment on the face of the old money-bags was only equaled by the look of fright on those of Drivel and the major.

They all sprang to their feet around the table at which they had been seated, and which was littered with papers, shares of stock and check-books, and stood with open eyes and mouths awaiting their doom.

Grimesy slowly and deliberately took a paper from his pocket, and pretended to read as follows:

"KNOW YE:—That Epizootic Drivel and Freshwater Quillpick, having been guilty, each and severally, of a misdemeanor, in attempting to fraudulently and feloniously extort money from Obediah Sweatwell and others, are hereby declared felons; and I do hereby authorize and command any policeman, constable, or marshal within my jurisdiction to place them under arrest.

"[Signed.]

JOHN C. STUFFYTOT,

"Justice of the Peace."

This somewhat faulty form of warrant, read in as heavy a voice as Grimesy could command, had the desired effect. The two



HE OPENED THE VALISE, AND THE CAT, WITH A LOUD SQUALL, JUMPED OUT INTO HIS FACE.

long in pulling out the togs, and arraying themselves in policemen's attire, and buckling their "billies" around them. As the uniforms were mostly for large men, it cannot be wondered at if the boys found it difficult to get anywise near a fit, and that they presented a grotesque appearance when togged out.

Grimesy, Mertý, and a boy named Dingy Littletoe, represented the officers, and wore the villainous-looking whiskers which Jags had hired for the expedition of the previous evening, and looked formidable enough to frighten the toughest gang in town.

When all was in readiness, Grimesy gave the order to march, and they filed down the hall, fortunately meeting no one until they made the turn in the hall that led down to the private parlor.

Here, however, they encountered a negro waiter, who was just starting up stairs (the stairs starting from near the turn) with a pitcher of lemonade, and a half-dozen glasses on a tray. At sight of the police the coon yelled "Lordy Massa!" dropped his tray, and went up the stairs at about four strides, so fast, in fact, that the boys saw only a black streak, polka-dotted with a pair of white eyes.

Meeting with no further adventure, they soon reached the door of the private parlor, where the head of the column halted, and Grimesy began softly whistling "Little Annie Rooney." In about a minute the door opened slightly, and Grimesy could

would-be swindlers were livid with fright. They were promptly handcuffed, and Grimesy stated that he would have to take all parties present to the police station that they might be held as witnesses for the examination, when, by a preconcerted plan, the lights were turned out.

This was done on purpose to give the old chaps a chance to get away, as the boys didn't want to be bothered with them, and it would betray them if they allowed them to go. And they were not long in taking advantage of the opportunity. Such a scrambling, and bustling, and piling over each other to get out has seldom been witnessed.

Fat men got wedged in the door, and were literally kicked and jammed through or climbed over. Silk hats were walked on and coats were torn in two, and when the crowd finally got out and rushed wildly through the office, they presented more the appearance of ragpickers than millionaires.

Drivel and the major made several attempts to break away during the riot, and got severely clubbed for their pains.

According to a prearranged plan the boys had a close carriage waiting in the street, and the two prisoners were hustled into this, with four of the boys, including Grimesy and his chum, as guards, and driven away.

The rest of the boys went to Grimesy's room, and divesting themselves of the police outfits, hurried out and took a Sixth avenue elevated train. After riding to the terminus of that road

they had to walk but a few blocks when they were in that thinly populated part of the city where there is seldom any one seen after ten o'clock at night, and here they awaited the arrival of the carriage. They had not long to wait, for the driver, one of Merty's chums from the livery stable, had put the team through for all it was worth, and the boys stopped the carriage and made everybody dismount. They had all put on masks and claimed to be White Caps.

The leader of the gang, addressing Grimesy, said:

"Captain, you have in charge two men whom we have long had our eyes on, but whom we never had a chance to get hold of before. Now, we ask you to surrender them peacefully, if you will, but if you will not, then we must take them by force."

"Who are you that makes this demand of an officer of the law?" asked Grimesy, in a very tragic voice.

"We are that band of brave men and true who, when law ceases to be administered with justice, take the law in our own hands. We are that band of terrors to all evil-doers, the White Caps!"

At the mention of White Caps, the major and Drivel nearly fainted.

"Then, sir," said Grimesy, in the same stentorian voice, "much as I revere duty and love justice, your superior numbers compel me to yield. All I ask is that you will deal gently with

tied, but merely looped around so that they could easily get loose.

The crowd then stepped off a few paces, and, at the word "fire," let off a volley of blank cartridges at the prisoners.

The boys then took to their heels and were soon back to the elevated station, where they took the train for down town.

As luck would have it the night-clerk was asleep when Grimesy entered, so he got up to his room without being noticed.

Jags beat him down to the office next morning, and although he wasn't feeling well, he greeted him with great cordiality and treated him like a prince. He wouldn't even let Grimesy sweep the office floor, but made the porter who swept the halls do it.

"That was a narrow escape for me, I tell you," he said. "I'm mighty thankful I got through without the major knowin' anything about it."

"That was a dandy doctor you had," said Grimesy.

"Yes, but he gives the worst medicine I ever tasted. And then that bleedin' is awful weakenin'. It will take six months to recover the blood he took away from me."

"He's one of the old-fashioned doctors, I think; but he's a good one."

Just then the major staggered in the front door, wobbled to



EVERYBODY WAS PERCHED UPON CHAIRS, COUNTER, AND TABLES, WHEN GRIMESY STROLLED IN, AS COOL AS AN ICE-PITCHER.

the prisoners, especially his Job-Lots, the drum-major, for he was raised a pet, and was never used to husk mattresses and skim milk.

"We appreciate your solicitation for this hardened old villain, captain," said the other, "but he may consider himself fortunate if he has the soft side of a board to sleep on and Croton water as a beverage."

"I hope at least that you do not intend to hang them," pleaded Grimesy.

"We make no promises. And now, as our time is precious, you will have to excuse us. Ta-ta, captain."

And they marched the prisoners away.

Grimesy and his three companions crawled inside of the carriage and took off their uniforms and whiskers, put on masks and overtook the so-called White Caps.

They walked the major and Drivel's legs nearly off, and finally when they got them away out to a very lonely spot, they stopped and voted on whether they would hang or shoot the prisoners. After a good deal of discussion and pretended quarreling among the crowd they at length decided to shoot them.

The major and Drivel begged for mercy, and made all kinds of promises, but the committee was immovable, and the prisoners were tied to a tree. Of course, the rope was not really

a chair, and threw himself into it. He was a sight. His clothes were torn, and he was covered with mud.

Jags didn't dare to speak to him, but Grimesy wasn't afraid. He approached the major, and said:

"Major, you look tired. Is there anything I can do for you?"

The major who had been sitting with his eyes closed, now opened them, and was about to commence abusing Grimesy, but suddenly changed his mind, and said, mildly:

"No, my boy, there is nothing; I think I'll go to bed; I'm not well."

"All right, I'll go with you," said Grimesy, and he helped the major up to his room.

"Say, Grimesy, my boy," he said, after he got undressed and into bed; "that fellow, Drivel, told you all about his wicked scheme, didn't he?"

"Unfortunately he did," said Grimesy. "But I knew you were too honest a man to go into it."

"Grimesy," said the major, and here he broke down and sobbed, as mandlin men are apt to do. "Grimesy, I wish I had been too honest to go into it."

"You don't mean to say that you did?" cried Grimesy, in mock astonishment.

"Yes, Grimesy, I did, and I shall never cease to regret my

folly. I will tell you all about it; for you are the only friend I have, and I know that you will not betray me."

"Rely on me," said Grimesy, sympathetically.

"I know I can, for you're a good boy, Grimesy," blubbered the major. "Well, that bad man induced me to go into his scheme, and I got a lot of my moneyed acquaintances here, and together we had about persuaded them to buy the stock, when suddenly—and I cannot imagine how they got on to it—the police came in upon us—"

"You don't say so!" said Grimesy, in mock surprise. "It's a wonder I didn't wake up. But I'm an awful sound sleeper."

"Yes, the police came in and arrested Drivel and myself, and started to take us somewhere in a carriage, I don't know where, but the first I knew we were away at the upper end of the city, and then a crowd of White Caps took us from the police, tied us to a tree and shot a hundred times at us, and—"

"Didn't they hit you?"

"No. Fortunately, they were such poor shots that they missed us, though we heard the bullets whistling all about us. After they had gone we managed to get loose, and then came more trouble."

"More White Caps?"

"No. I found that I hadn't a cent of money with me, and, of course, Drivel had none; so we had to foot it all the way back."

"That was sad, major; but where did you pick up the jag?"

"Now, Grimesy, don't say jag. It's slang; besides, I am not intoxicated; I admit that I did take a little weak wine—next door here; couldn't get it till I got where I was known—but that was for sickness, Grimesy. I never take anything except in a case of sickness."

"I'm awful sorry you got into trouble, major," said Grimesy. "But if you do again, wake me up another time, and mebbe I can save you all that pain, dear major."

"Oh, Grimesy, your goodness of heart overwhelms me!" blubbered the major, embracing him. "Why are you so good?"

"Dunno. Reckon I'm just built that way. But please don't hug me so close, major dear; there's something about your breath that makes me sad."

"You had better leave me now, my boy," said the major, "and I'll try to steal a few winks of sleep."

"Yes, dear major, try to sleep. 'Twill do you good. Ta-ta, sweet friend."

And Grimesy galloped out and left him.

"What's the trouble with the major?" asked Jags, when Grimesy got back to the office.

"Oh, he's a little weary, that's all," said Grimesy.

"Drunk, you mean. Say, the old man's in some kind of trouble, and you know what it is, Grimesy. Tell me, won't you?"

"I don't know anything, except that he was out late last night, and feels tired."

"You can't stuff me that way, boy," said Jags. "What were all those fellows doin' here last night? and what were all those policemen, that scared the coon out of his wits, here for? There's something in the wind."

"How should I know, when I was asleep?"

"You were not asleep. Sweatwell told me something about it; but wouldn't tell me all. He said you could tell me."

"Well, if you know that much of it, you might as well know the rest," said Grimesy, as he related the events of the night before. "But," said he, "you must keep mum about my connection with it."

"Of course I will. But I'll tell you one thing," said Jags, "the old scoundrel won't bulldoze me any more. From this out, Grimesy, I'm goin' to be a man."

"That's a good resolution to make," said Grimesy. "And now I think we might have a little more fun out of his Job-Lots."

"How's that?"

"Why, he is under the impression that nobody knows anything about this matter but me and the police, and he thinks that as the White Caps took him away from them, they are satisfied. Now, what's the matter with disguising ourselves as reporters, and going up and interviewing him?"

"Splendid! But how can we do it?"

"You go to your costumer and get whiskers for two, and I'll manage the rest."

"I'll do it," said the clerk, in great glee. "I'll get three if you think your chum will be around to-night."

"All right, get three, for he's sure to be here."

The clerk waltzed off after the wigs and whiskers, leaving Grimesy in charge of the office.

He had only been gone a few minutes, when a man came in with a big valise which he wanted to leave for a short time. Grimesy took the valise and the fellow went away.

As Grimesy went to put the valise behind the counter, it flew

open and a lot of boxes of some kind of vermin exterminator tumbled out.

Grimesy went to put them back, and noticed that the valise was empty on one side.

"No wonder the thing comes open," he said to himself. "It's loaded too much on one side. I think I can remedy this." So saying, he got the office cat and put it into the valise.

He had no more than done so, when the owner of the valise came back.

"Give me my valise, please," said the man.

Grimesy handed it out to him, when the fellow said:

"Where's the proprietor or clerk?"

"The proprietor's sleeping off the effects of a prayer-meeting, and you see the clerk before you," said Grimesy.

"Ah," said the man, "the very party I want to see, then. Are you troubled with rats, mice, bedbugs or cockroaches?"

"Personally, never," said Grimesy.

"I mean, have you got them in the house?"

"I might find you a few, I s'pose. What are you paying for 'em now?" asked Grimesy, very earnestly.

"You don't understand me," said the man, somewhat surprised at the question. "I'm not buying them, I—"

"Ah, well we don't want to buy any."

"I am not selling them either," cried the fellow, getting nervous.

"Well, what are you doing with them?"

"Killing them."

"Lemme see you kill 'em. Got any with you?"

"No, no. You don't understand me. I am selling Great-head's Vermin Exterminator."

"Will that knock 'em silly?"

"Yes, it will," said the fellow. "I have here something that will rid any house of rats or mice in twenty-four hours. You just take it like this," he went on, putting his valise on the counter in front of him, "and sprinkle—" here he opened the valise, and the cat gave a loud squeal and jumped out into his face.

"Great Scott!" yelled the man, "What's that?"

"Rough on rats," said Grimesy, innocently.

"I should say so," said the fellow. "I wonder where that cat came from."

"It came out o' your grip."

"I know," said the man, looking embarrassed; "but how did it get in there?"

"You put it in, of course."

"No, I didn't."

"Why, of course you did. Didn't you say you were selling Vermin Exterminator?"

"Yes, but—"

"That's all right, now; you know you wanted to palm off a lot of second-hand cats on us; but that one burst the package and give you away."

"You think you're blamed smart, don't you!" said the man, shutting his valise with a vicious snap, and preparing to go.

"That's right, shut 'em up before any more of 'em get out," said Grimesy, without a smile. "Shall I catch the other one for you; or will you leave it as a sample?"

"You go to blazes, young feller!" shouted the fellow, making for the door.

"All right, we'll give it a thorough trial, and you can call round in a few days and get it, or—"

"I'll call round an' get you if you give me—"

"Look out! Who are you walkin' over?" yelled Jags, coming in the door at that moment, and running up against the fellow, who was walking backward, and knocking his valise out of his hands. The valise flew open when it fell and about half its contents flew out.

The fellow gathered them up as quickly as possible, and slid.

"What is this, anyway?" asked the clerk.

"Oh, that's a case of rough on rats," said Grimesy.

"What's his hurry?"

Grimesy told him what had happened, at which the clerk laughed, which led Grimesy to believe that he really was getting to be a man.

The day passed without incident, and in the evening after the night-clerk went on duty, Grimesy's chum came in, and they all three repaired to Jags' room.

It did not take them long to disguise themselves as reporters, and then they went to the major's room to interview him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INTERVIEW—MIXING THINGS ALL AROUND.

When Grimesy, his chum, and Jags knocked at the major's door, that good man was in the act of dressing himself, but had got no further along in the operation than putting on a shirt and a pair of slippers; and it was in that attire that he received them.

He seemed a little surprised, not to say "rattled," when the three strangers filed into the room and solemnly presented their cards.

"Are—are you reporters?" he gasped, after looking at the cards.

"We are," answered the three, in one breath.

"Ha! ha! glad to see you, very," said the major, struggling to be merry with a heavy heart. "Sit down, gentlemen, do. What can I do for you?"

"We want to know the particulars of the mining stock swindle that you and a party by the name of Drivel tried to perpetrate on some capitalists last night," said Grimesy, in a voice that nobody would have suspected was his own.

"You've struck the wrong party, gentlemen," said the major, growing very nervous. "I—I know nothing about anything of that kind. I'm an honest——"

"We know all about your honesty," said Grimesy, severely. "We also know that you know all about the matter I spoke of."

"Indeed, sir, you are mistaken. I never——"

"Now, my dear sir," said Grimesy, "it isn't going to do you any good to equivocate in this matter; for we already have Drivel's side of the story."

"Eh?" gasped the major, turning pale.

"That's what I said," said Grimesy.

"What did he say?"

"He told us all about the scheme that you had got up to swindle these men, and lead him, an innocent young man, into your sinful scheme."

"Oh, the wicked man! He got up the scheme himself, and led me into it, the naughty man."

"Then you admit that you were into it?"

"Well, he led me into it."

"Aren't you old enough to know better?"

"I suppose I ought to be; but I am so innocent, and easily led astray," blubbered the major.

"What are we going to do about this, gentlemen?" asked Grimesy, addressing his companions. "Drivel claims it was the major, and the major claims it was Drivel. Whom are we to believe?"

"Neither," said the other two.

"All we can do," said Merty, "is to give each man's version, and then tell the straight of it. The fact of it is, that one is just as guilty as the other. They're a pair, and don't you forget it."

"Gentlemen, you wrong me," cried the major. "I never stole so much as a pin in my life."

"No, of course not," said Grimesy; "because you found it more profitable to steal the money and buy the pin. Nothing small about you."

"You wouldn't steal a red-hot stove, either, would you?" said Merty.

"Nor a live electric wire," said Grimesy.

"Nor a tiger cub if its mother was round," said Merty.

"Gentlemen, I hope you won't publish this thing about me," cried the major. "Think of my family."

"I know it's tough on your family," said Grimesy. "Which consists, I believe, of a wife, a bell-boy, and a cat."

"Yes, but think what a blow it will be to my wife, and consider what it is to blight Grimesy's young life."

"And the cat," said Grimesy. "We must consider how the cat will pine away and lose its appetite. As for the boy, you old nincompoop, you're only paying him a dollar a week, when you ought to pay him at least five."

"I intend to pay him more from this on."

"How much more?" asked Grimesy.

"I'll pay him five dollars if you won't publish this thing."

"But you're only paying your clerk five dollars a week. Raise him to ten?"

"Yes, I'll raise him to ten."

"What else will you do?"

"Anything you say."

"Well, we want you to live on oatmeal, and drink nothing stronger than water, and walk four miles every morning in your bare feet."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the major.

"And take a cold bath every morning, and get Grimesy and Jags a new suit of clothes once a month."

"Have mercy on me, gentlemen! I cannot do that," groaned the major.

"Think of your family."

"But how's a man to walk four miles in his bare feet?"

"That's nothing. Some men walk on broken bottles," said Grimesy, "and that is more than walking on an empty stomach."

"What's that?" asked the major, as Merty leveled an improvised kodak at him.

"Oh, that's a kodak," replied Grimesy. "We've got to take your picture, you know."

"What for?"

"To use in connection with the story, in case we publish it."

"But if I carry out your instructions, you won't publish it, will you?"

"No."

"Then you shall not take my picture!"

"You're too late, old man," said Merty; "I've got your picture, though I'm afraid it's not very good."

"Then you'd better sit still and have a good one," said Grimesy. "You don't want a picture that looks like a freak, with your name under it."

The major finally consented to have his picture taken, and Merty shoved the so-called kodak up within a foot of his face, and pressed a spring, when a stream of cold water shot out, and drenched him from head to foot.

The boys then waltzed out and left him in a very unhappy state of mind.

The major was extremely meek the next morning. From the politeness which he showed the clerk and Grimesy, you would have sworn that those young gentlemen owned the hotel, and that the major was a mere hireling.

After he got back from the market the major took Grimesy to one side, and said:

"Grimesy, my boy, you remember I promised you an advance in wages at the end of three months."

"Yes, sir," said Grimesy. "Going to make it six, I s'pose."

"On the contrary, I am going to advance you at once."

"You don't say so! Haven't got the enlargement of the heart?"

"No; but Grimesy, I find you are a very good boy, and for that reason I'm going to advance you."

"So I'll get a dollar and a quarter from now on, will I?"

"No, sir, you'll receive five dollars per week."

"See here, major, you're joking, I know; but you oughtn't to startle me like that, I'm troubled with heart disease, and you'd feel awful to have me drop dead."

"No, I'm not joking," protested the major. "From now on you shall have five dollars a week."

"Thanks, awfully. But aren't you afraid it'll ruin you to pay such wages?"

"I don't care if it does. I've taken such a liking to you, that I'll do it anyway."

"Reckless man," cried Grimesy, sorrowfully. "But there's the bell. Ta-ta, dear major."

And Grimesy shot off up stairs like a flash of lightning.

When he had gone, the major approached Jags, and said:

"Jags, that's an excellent boy."

"Yes," said Jags, "there ain't many boys like him."

"So willing, so kind-hearted," said the major: "never happy unless he can be doing something for somebody, Jags."

"He's a dandy," said Jags.

"And what I like about him best of all," said the major, "he never plays tricks on people."

"No, he never thinks of such a thing," said Jags.

"Jags," said the major, his eyes growing moist, "I'm going to do something for that boy."

"You ought to."

"Yes, I've just told him that I was going to raise his wages; but I think I'll do better than that, Jags. I have no children of my own, and I think of adopting him as a son, if he keeps on the way he's been doing."

"You're a very generous-hearted, good man, major," said the clerk, pretending to be much affected. "The world doesn't appreciate you."

"No, I ain't, Jags. I'm a very bad, selfish man; or have been. But from this on I'm going to reform. Jags, I'll raise your wages, too. From now on you shall have ten dollars a week."

"Thanks," said Jags, wiping his eyes; "your kindness shall never be forgotten."

"Don't mention it, Jags, my dear boy," cried the major, shaking the clerk's hand.

The major then went away. About this time the usual crowd

of loafers who infest a third-rate hotel began to gather. These loafers, like all of their kind, were lazy and good-for-nothing, and seemed to have no loftier ambition in life than to kill time. The most cronic of these was a pair of old cronies named, respectively, Jonas Foghorn, a fat and greasy old duffer, and Abe Squeezer, a tall, cadaverous, dried-up old blade, with sandy neck whiskers, and a talent for chewing tobacco, and squirting the juice through his teeth with more accurate aim than any man in the ward.

These old cronies would sit all day long, Foghorn smoking a rank pipe, and Squeezer chewing and firing at a distant spittoon, or at a vagrant fly on the floor, and spin yarns or talk on the commonplace matters that came in their way. And they were usually surrounded by a promiscuous crowd of other idlers, who played the part of a stock company to these two worthy stars.

On the present occasion one of the loafers had a dog with him, an ugly mongrel cur that was about as worthless as its master.

Nevertheless, the arrival of the brute called forth a long and animated discussion of dogs in general and this dog in particular.

Finally the conversation turned upon dogs going mad, and this naturally lead to a series of stories on the subject.

Abe Squeezer was in the midst of a long-winded and blood-curdling yarn, and the dog had wandered away to another part of the office and lain down.

It somewhat struck Grimesy about this time that Abe needed a practical illustration to embellish his story and give it coloring.

He, therefore, got some soap-suds and put it in the dog's mouth, and followed up the action by putting a spring clothes-pin on his tail.

Instantly the dog jumped up and started on a tour around the room, yelling at every jump and apparently frothing at the mouth, as much like a mad dog as anything could be.

Old Abe had just reached that part of his story where he said:

"And then, gentlemen, that thar dog jest kem tearin' along as though the old Nick war arter him, and——"

Just then the real dog made a dash in among the audience of the story-teller.

"Thunder and Mars!" yelled old Jonas, jumping up. "What's the matter with that blamed dorg?!"

"He's mad!" roared Abe, jumping on a chair. "Don't you see him frothing at the mouth?"

"Holy smoke!" yelled Rafe Plum, the owner of the dog, as the animal made for him. "Git out! git out!" and he jumped about ten feet to get away from the dog, knocked the chair from under old Abe and the feet from under old Jonas, and turned a somersault into a sawdust spittoon.

Old Abe stood gracefully on his head, while old Jonas' fat body was so tightly wedged between the legs of an inverted stool that they had to take a crowbar to pry him out; and he yelled so lustily that half a hundred people were attracted from the street. But no sooner would the crowd rush in at one door and catch a glimpse of the frantic dog, than they would pile indiscriminately out at the other.

Everybody had either got out of the room or was perched upon chairs, counters, and tables out of reach of the furious animal, when Grimesy strolled in as cool as an ice-pitcher, and gazing languidly about at the panic-stricken crowd, said:

"What's the rumpus?"

"Jump on a chair, quick!" yelled the clerk from the top of the counter. "Don't you see the dog is mad?"

"What's he mad about?" asked Grimesy, coolly.

"Hydrophobia, you idiot!" yelled old Abe, who had put a chair on top of a table and was standing on it. "Git up somewhere, or git out!"

"Nothing the matter with that dog," said Grimesy, grabbing him by the collar with one hand and dexterously removing the clothes-pin with the other. "Nice dog," he continued, patting the animal's head and stroking his back. "Funny how people get scared so easy."

He then released the dog, who went off and laid down, and Grimesy cast a look of disdain at the now rather sheepish-looking crowd, and said:

"What's eating you fellows, any way? A person would suppose to see you roosting up like that, that there was danger of high water."

The crowd gradually got down from their perches, and most of them slunk away looking kind of mean, and as if they hated themselves. But old Abe Squeezer got slowly down, keeping his eyes fixed on Grimesy, and then walked up within a few feet of him, surveyed the boy from head to foot for a moment, and said:

"Well, dogon my buttons, ef that thar kid ain't bewitched!"

Grimesy looked at him with a sad, mysterious expression of face for a moment, and then began to advance toward old Abe, making mysterious passes with his hands.

"Go way! go way!" yelled old Abe, backing away. "Don't kem nigh me with yer rigamorollin'! Go way, I tell you, er I'll hurt yer!"

But as Grimesy kept advancing, old Abe kept backing, and finally when he got near the door he ran out.

For some time after this the hotel was rid of the loafers, but in time they wandered back again.

Late in the afternoon the major went to Grimesy, and said:

"My boy, Boggles has to go away to-night, and I would like to have you take his place as night-clerk. You won't have much to do, and you can sleep in the morning as late as you please to make up for it. I know I can trust you better than I can any one else."

"All right, sir," said Grimesy; "if you are willing to trust me, I'll do the best I can."

"Yes, I know that," said the major, "And if you like you may have your chum, who seems to be a very nice boy, to stay with you, and if he will do the running up stairs in your place, I will pay him for his trouble."

"All right, sir," said Grimesy, only too well pleased with the arrangement.

At seven o'clock Jags went off, and Grimesy took his place, and later in the evening Merty came in.

He was surprised to see Grimesy behind the desk, and said:

"Hello, what are you doing there?"

"Me? Why, I'm night-clerk now," said Grimesy. "I ain't got no cluster diamond, but you can just imagine you see something sparkle on my head-light and you'll be just as happy."

"What's the matter with putting a little wick on your bosom? That'll shine just as well by gaslight as a diamond?"

"How dare you make such a proposition to your superior officer?" demanded Grimesy, with mock indignation. "You're to be bell-boy to-night."

"No, is that so?"

"That's what the gov'nor wants."

"Good enough. We won't have any fun, I reckon."

"No rackets, my boy, or I'll discharge you."

As Grimesy said this he sauntered out of the office leaving Merty to attend to the next victim, who soon arrived. He was a medium sized man, with a smooth face and long hair, and he glided up to the counter with a stealthy, cat-like tread, and said in a voice scarcely above a whisper:

"My wife is stopping here, I believe, and I wish to be shown to her room."

"The name, please?" said Merty.

"She goes by the name of Miss Susan Mayhew," said the stranger, "but, of course, that is not her right name—that, in short, is her stage-name. She is an actress. Her right name is Mrs. Smithers. My name is Harold Smithers. Here is my card—comedian—with Barnstormer's Redlight Company. She doesn't expect me, and I wish to give her a little surprise. See?"

"Yes," said Merty, eying the fellow suspiciously. "I'll show you up in a minute."

Now, Merty knew of Miss Mayhew through the soap racket which Grimesy had played on Jags, and it struck him at once that there was something wrong; and while he didn't like to tell the fellow that he could not go to her room, he felt that it would not be right to allow him to go without knowing something more about it.

In view of this perplexity, therefore, he decided to send the fellow to another room. Of course, he knew the man would discover the mistake and come back; but by that time Grimesy would return, and he could straighten matters out.

Merty, therefore, pretended to consult the register and assigned the stranger to the first number that came into his head, which happened to be 31.

He gave the fellow the key, and told him how he could find the room, at the same time apologizing for not having a bell-boy to go with him.

Now it happened that it was occupied by a cranky old chap who lived in mortal dread of being robbed, and would allow nobody to room with him.

Smithers, desiring to give his wife a surprise, as he said, entered the room very softly, and did not light the gas until he had undressed.

He then lit the gas, but turned it low, and approached the bedside softly, with a smile on his face and joy in his heart.

But smile and joy were both short-lived, for he had no more than laid his hand on what he supposed was his sleeping wife, than Joggins sprang out of bed and grabbed Smithers by the throat.

There was a fierce and silent struggle for a few seconds, but

Joggins was much the better man, and at the end of a minute and a half Smithers landed in the hall with what few clothes he had on torn to ribbons and a badly scratched face.

And in this condition he returned to the office, to confront the bewildered Merty.

"What in blazes did you mean by sending me to that room?" roared Smithers, wiping the blood from his face with the tattered sleeve of his night-shirt. "Are you crazy, or are you a natural born idiot?"

"I guess so," said Merty, now worse perplexed than ever. "Did—didn't you find your wife?"

"Didn't I find my wife?" yelled Smithers. "No, I didn't find my wife, but I came very near finding my death!"

"Why—was there anybody in the room?" gasped Merty.

"Was there! Look at me! Does this look as if there was anybody in the room, or do you imagine I have been having a set-to with a buzz-saw?"

"I'm very sorry," said Merty. "But——"

"What good does your blamed sorrow do me?" roared Smithers. "I'm sorry, too; but what good does that do? Here I am in my night-apparel, and they torn to ribbons, while my clothes are locked in the room up there with that horrid assassin! To say nothing of having my face torn off!"

"Well, you see, I'm not the regular clerk, and——"

"Where in blazes is the regular clerk, then?" roared Smithers.

Just at this moment Grimesy made his appearance, greatly to the relief of Merty.

"Now, sir, what can I do for you?" Grimesy inquired of Smithers.

"Well, sir, in the first place, I want my clothes out of room 31," cried Smithers.

"What are your clothes doing in 31?" asked Grimesy, indignantly. "Joggins has that room."

"I know," said Smithers, "but your assistant sent me there by mistake; and I didn't discover the mistake until I was undressed, and then that assassin up there threw me out without my clothes."

"That's sad," said Grimesy. "What room did you want?"

"My wife's room—Miss Mayhew."

"Miss Mayhew?"

"Yes."

"How could Miss Mayhew be your wife?"

"Well, you see, that's her stage name. Her right name's Mrs. Smithers. Please get my clothes and give me a key to her room; I want to surprise her."

"Look here, old fellow, if you go to gliding into her room on the sly, she'll surprise you!" said Grimesy. "She's a holy terror, she is."

"I'll risk that, if you'll get me my clothes and give me a key."

"I'll get your clothes for you, but I can't give you no key," said Grimesy, "for how do I know that she's your wife? I'm liable to get into trouble."

"You get me my duds, and I'll soon convince you that she's my wife, all right."

"Front!" said Grimesy. "Go to 31, and see if you can get this man's clothes."

"All right, sir," said Merty, and away he dashed.

When he got up to 31 he found Smithers' clothes lying outside of the door, and brought them down to that gentleman.

"Now for the proof," said Smithers, after he had dressed, pulled out a lot of letters and a photograph of himself taken with Miss Mayhew and a child.

He also showed some of the letters to Grimesy, and then said:

"Now, are you satisfied?"

"Yes," said Grimesy. "I'll give you the key; but don't blame me if you get killed."

"No, I won't blame you, my boy," said Smithers, who was overjoyed at the happy prospect of soon meeting his wife. "If I come down with a bloody nose now it will be my own fault."

Grimesy gave him the key to 23, and Smithers waltzed off the happiest man in New York.

After a few moments of silence there was a sort of rushing noise, and Grimesy said:

"What's this coming down stairs?"

As the boys looked, they beheld Smithers coming down the steps at a lively pace, his clothes badly torn and his face bleeding worse than it was after his encounter with Joggins.

"More fighting, I s'pose," said Grimesy.

"What's the matter with that man anyway?" said Merty.

"He's no sooner out of one scrape than he's into another."

By that time Smithers was at the desk.

"Now, look here, young fellers, this thing has got to stop right here!" yelled Smithers, in a towering passion. "It's all right for boys to have fun, and all that sort of thing, but enough's enough of anything."

"Well, my Christian friend, what's the matter now?" asked Grimesy.

"Don't ask foolish questions!" he roared. "It's bad enough to play a trick of this kind a second time, without adding insult to injury by asking innocent questions."

"My dear sir, I haven't the slightest idea what you are talking about," said Grimesy. "You asked me to send you to Miss Mayhew's room, and I did so. I told you she'd probably give you a surprise."

"Nonsense!" yelled Smithers. "Do you mean to tell me that you didn't know my wife was not in that room you sent me to?"

"I know she is."

"Well, I know she is not!" roared Smithers. "Now, I want to be sent to my wife's room, and I don't want any more nonsense about it, or there will be trouble."

"There has been trouble as it is," suggested Merty, safely.

"Yes, but the trouble will be on somebody else's head next time," said Smithers, savagely. "Now give me the right number of my wife's room, and that in a hurry."

"Well, sir, if she is not in that room, she's not in the house," said Grimesy.

"I know better, sir!"

"Well, I'll show you right here on the register," said Grimesy, opening the book, and glancing over the list of names.

"What's this?" he cried, in astonishment. "Transferred to 25? Miss Hulda Spiker in 23!" he gasped; "that settles it."

"Didn't you know anything about the transfer?" asked Smithers.

"I did not. The day-clerk made this entry to-day, and it's the first I've heard of it."

"Miss Spiker," mused Merty. "Isn't that the woman that horsewhipped the theatrical manager last week, Grimesy?"

"Yes. She's a holy terror when she gets started," said Grimesy.

"Well, she got started to-night," said Smithers.

"What did she do?" asked Grimesy.

"What did she do! Heavens! don't ask me. Why, as I told you, I wanted to give my wife a little surprise, so I slipped into the room and commenced undressing. Well, I hadn't got off my coat when I heard some one stirring in the bed, so I stopped and kept quiet. But that didn't do me any good, for the first thing I knew, a shoe with an iron heel on it took me biff in the face."

"Did you run?" asked Grimesy.

"No, I thought it was my wife, so I said: 'Susie, my darling, don't be cross, it's me.'"

"Did that quiet her?"

"Quiet her? Gee-wittaker! You wouldn't have thought so if you'd seen her!"

"Did she go for you?"

"Well, I should say so. Why, I hadn't the words out of my mouth when she yelled: 'I'll Susie you!' and then she lit into me. Hair pulling—scratching! Don't mention it! She—well, look at me!"

"You do look as if you'd been caressed by a menagerie," said Grimesy.

"That's what I have," said Smithers.

"I'm very sorry," said Grimesy; "but you can see for yourself that the mistake was not mine."

"Yes, I can see now, but I was pretty mad at first," said Smithers.

"Don't blame you," said Grimesy. "Front! Show Mr. Smithers to 25, and wait till you see whether he gets in all right, so that you can help him out if he gets into trouble again."

"All right," said Merty.

And he waltzed him off once more as happy as a lark, notwithstanding all his trouble.

"Well, did his jaglets find repose at last?" asked Grimesy, when Merty got back.

"I think so," said Merty. "He went into the room; and I listened, and pretty soon I heard laughing and talking, so I concluded it was all right, and came away."

"Well, old fellow, have you had rackets enough to-night to satisfy your longing desire?"

"Yes, this will do very well. But I s'pose the fun's over for to-night?"

"Yes, we won't be likely to have any more fun to-night," said Grimesy, "and you may go to bed if you feel like it."

"Nary bed as long as you sit up," said Merty. "I might miss something, and then I'd always blame myself."

We shall have to leave Grimesy and Merty for a while, but my readers will learn more of their joking proclivities by perusing my next story, entitled "Grimesy's Pair of Kids," which will be published in No. 87 of the NUGGET LIBRARY.

[THE END.]

Diamond Dick's Danger-Line;

OR,

THE TIGREROS OF TUOLUMNE.

By W. B. LAWSON.

CHAPTER I.

NEWS FROM OVER THE SIERRAS.

One morning in January—the middle of the mild California winter, or rainy season—a little more than a month after the stirring events constituting this *denouement* of the preceding novel of this series bearing the name of "Diamond Dick's Deep Dodge; or, Mexican Mingo's Nemesis," the familiar figure of our hero strode into an apartment of Fanshaw Ranch, Mono County, where Captain Fanny Fanshaw, the beautiful mistress of Esmeralda Ranch, in distant Idaho, appeared to be anxiously awaiting him.

Diamond Dick had evidently just returned from a long ride, and his looks were somewhat troubled and stern.

In fact, he was just back from a visit to the county seat, by express invitation, and in order to receive the formal thanks of the sheriff and other authorities for his chief instrumentality in defeating Mexican Mingo and his bravos in their attack upon Fanshaw Ranch, and in virtually driving them out of the county limits in consequence.

"Well?" and she held out her hand, with her beautiful smile.

"Just as you and I both thought," he discontentedly replied, raising the hand devotedly to his lips. By the way, why had not these two, seemingly so well-fitted for the complement of one another's happiness in every respect, married before this? Was the insuperable objection thus far the confirmed; solitariness of the man, or the as yet unexplained twin birth-marks, whose elucidation he insisted upon as a determining first condition, and which the lady, for some mysterious reason, as proudly continued to withhold? We can only await the truth through the evolution of these strange adventure-linked and mystery-permeated tales. "Nothing but empty or fulsome praises for me, and continued indetermination or indolent, happy-go-lucky do-nothingism for themselves and the community-interests intrusted to their care. It is disheartening!"

"Ah!"

And Captain Fan simply signaled him to the seat by her side, and waited for more.

"Yes," he continued, more thoughtfully; "or rather it would be disheartening, but for my own secret determination in the matter."

"You laid the whole case before them forcibly and distinctly, no doubt?"

"Of course. I even took their chart of the bunch of Sierran wilderness between the three counties hereabouts, and clearly demonstrated the matter as it stands. I drew the danger-line for them just as I had sent it with my warning to Mexican Mingo, or Juan Cavaljo, after his escape with his bandit crew across the border into Tuolumne County—straight down from Castle Peak to Mount Dana, save for the unavoidable following of canon and valley trends. I told them that now was the time to cross beyond that and attack him witheringly with an overpowering militia or legalized force, without waiting perhaps vainly for him to disregard any injunction, and raid and hurry back this way into Mono. I presented every argument that I could think of in support of what I urged.

"But, no!" with a gesture of disgust. "The miscreants were now in Tuolumne—Mono was shut of them—so let the Tuolumne authorities deal with them as they might or could. So long as Mingo did not come back into our own section of the Sierras, did not overstep the danger-line as set forth by me, and which is almost the same as our county line, as you know, it was well enough for Mono. Let well enough alone! that, in a nutshell, is the policy of the lazy or parsimonious authorities here. It is disgusting!"

"Still, I had about expected this, or something like this," said Captain Fan.

"And you were right, as usual, dear friend. Why, even when we were consulting and hobnobbing—it's about one and the same thing with the Mono authorities," contemptuously; "they hobnob on very slight provocation over in our county seat; even at that time there came in a report of a fresh outrage on the part of the infernal tigreros just over the line—the burning and destruction of an entire little community of peaceable vine-growers and charcoal-burners—Mexicans, to be sure, but honest and

worthy fellow-citizens—with all the young women carried off into a captivity worse than death! But what was the effect of the report? and it was accompanied by others equally distressing. "Oh, that isn't in Mono, that is over to Tuolumne. Yes, we grant you that it was precious close to your danger-line, and that it would be much easier for us to retaliate from this side than for the Tuolumne men to reach the miscreants from their side, with the chaotic jumble of the worst of the Sierras between them and their insulters. But what of that? We're all right. The greaser outlaws ain't troublin' us any more—at least, not yet." And so they hemmed and hawed."

"And your own determination?"

"To seek out and run down the miscreant hounds, on my own account, and with a handful of the old pards, you mean?"

"Of course; for I know you can't rest till you've made a final end of his outlaw-organizing enormity."

"Right you are there, Frances! Oh, they hadn't a particle of objection to offer to that, as a matter of course. It wouldn't cost them anything, d'ye see?"

"You have Handsome Harry with you again. Isn't that his rough voice I hear out there among the corrals?"

"Yes; Harry was very contrite over his fault, and we are good friends again; as much so as ever, in fact."

"A good man! I am glad of that."

"So am I. His giant strength and mountaineering qualities will be of great use to use in this new expedition. Besides, Handsome Harry has been in hard luck. His Widow Bedott of a wife has recently died up in Siskiyou County, where he has been living—and roystering, too, I sadly fear—for the past year or so. And, though she must have been a good deal of a termagant, from what I have seen and heard, I have no doubt he felt the loss keenly. Harry's heart is as big as his head."

"It was good of you, Richard, to forgive him for having let Antelope Andy escape, after that wind-up of the rival outlaw chiefs at Flathead Lake. By the way, what do you suppose could have become of Andy after you unmasked him for Juan's benefit in the tigrero camp?"

"I can't imagine. Of course, he wouldn't dare to venture back to Juan, who detests him absolutely, and would assassinate him on sight. However, I feel it in my bones that the slippery scoundrel, like the devil, will turn up somewhere in due season, and when least expected."

"What is your plan?"

"It is all arranged. Besides myself, there will be Bertie, Handsome Harry, Mr. Anthers and Jumping Joe—not many, but enough."

"And me."

"Oh, no, Captain Fan."

"When do we start?"

"Look here, Captain Fan," with much earnestness, "it will be really best for you not to be of the party."

"Ah, I see!" with a flash of the blue-gray eyes. "I am growing old, I suppose, and cannot fight any more."

"Don't talk that way, dearest friend; it pains me."

"Then where are we going, my dear Richard? Answer me that, instead of your provoking me with your softness concerning me. The idea of your going where I cannot, or will not, go with you!"

He laughed his acquiescence, and, as she held out her shapely hand to him, pressed it gently and reassuringly once more.

"How about the old *Frenchman*, Plunkett?" he abruptly asked, after a momentary pause, with a significant emphasis on the italicized word.

"He's getting around again, with the help of a cane, but is still appearing very feeble."

"Oho!" and Diamond Dick knitted his brows.

"You are suspicious of him still?"

"I can't help being, to a certain degree."

"What! after that crushing rap which Mexican Mingo gave him on the top of his old head, and after they had burned the roof over him?"

"The first might have been preconcerted, in order to hood-wink us the more completely. And, as for the burning, pshaw! It was just the roof, as you say, and nothing else, the rambling old adobe walls being as good now as ever, and all but worthless at that."

"Diamond Dick, you are incorrigibly prejudiced, I really do think!"

"No, Captain Fan; only prudently distrustful. However, it is an hour to dinner yet; let us stroll down into the little valley, and take a look at the old fellow."

"Very well."

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